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J. Sangorski

G. Sutcliffe

RUBAIYAT · OF
OMAR · KHAYYAM

TRANSLATED · INTO · ENGLISH
VERSE · BY · EDWARD · FITZGERALD
WITH · AN · INTRODUCTION · BY

A.C.BENSON.
FELLOW · OF · MAGDALENE
COLLEGE · CAMBRIDGE

REPRODUCED · FROM · A · MANUSCRIPT · WRITTEN
AND · ILLUMINATED · BY · F.SANGORSKI & G.SUTCLIFFE.

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PREFACE.

The original writer of these poems – for it is important to remember that they are a series of short epigrams, and not a connected whole – was Omar Khayyám, an astronomer and a man of learning. It is strange to think of one, whose poems, in their English dress, seem to breathe so modern and so subtle a spirit, as having been contemporary with the Norman Conquest and the taking of Jerusalem by the Crusaders, with Hildebrand, with the Cid, with Peter the Hermit!

Not much is known about him from external sources, and the details of his life, as we have them, not only bear a legendary and romantic character, but seem curiously at variance with the temperament revealed in the poems.

It is said that he was one of a trio of friends who, as boys at school, took a vow that if any of them should attain eminence, he was to share his good fortune with the others. One of them became Vizier to the Sultan Alp-Arslán, son of Toghrul the Tartar, who founded the

dynasty of the Seljuks, the extension of whose empire was the eventual cause of the Crusades. The Vizier fulfilled the promise of his boyhood, gave one of his friends an office under the government, and conferred on Omar a large pension. Omar was a student, who composed astronomical, mathematical and metaphysical treatises, and was one of a Board who revised the calendar. He was an unsociable and self-contained man, and it is difficult to harmonise with his tastes and pursuits the sensuous and indeed sensual experiences that would seem from his poems to have played so large a part in his life. It is indeed possible that some of the poems are not his own work, but traditionally ascribed to him. Just as nowadays characteristic anecdotes tend to cluster loosely round well-known names, owing to a certain congruity of quality rather than to documentary evidence, so among Oriental nations there is a strong tendency to literary personification, conspicuous instances of which may be found in the vague attribution of the Old Testament Psalms to David, and the referring of other books, such as Proverbs and Wisdom, to Solomon.

The translator of Omar, Edward FitzGerald (1809–1883) was a literary recluse of Irish origin, son of a member of Parliament of great wealth and position as a landowner. He lived an obscure and leisurely life, marked by decided eccentricity, beguiling the time with music and dilettante literature. He translated and compiled much, but nothing that he ever wrote, except a few lyrics, made any approach to the extraordinary quality and exquisite perfection of this very free rendering of Omar's ⁘ quatrains. He was a man of strong and deep affection, winning and retaining the devoted friendship of Carlyle, Tennyson and Thackeray, to say nothing of many other known and unknown persons.

In the early fifties he took up the study of Persian; and his friend E.B.Cowell, afterwards Professor of Sanskrit at Cambridge, sent him a transcript of a rare MS., which he had found in the Bodleian, written on yellow paper in purple ink, profusely powdered with gold. FitzGerald worked at it fitfully for several years, and his unpublished letters to Cowell show how difficult he found the elucidation of the meaning.

He embodied with the work some lines translated from other Persian poets, and even some original stanzas of his own, making by selection and arrangement a vague progression or series out of them.

He published his translation privately in 1859, which is the text here reproduced, and gave the greater part of the issue to Quaritch, who finding that he could dispose of none of it, relegated it to a stall in St. Martin's Lane. Here it was discovered by D.G. Rossetti and Swinburne, who bought at a penny apiece a few copies of what is now a very valuable bibliographical curiosity. But even so its merit escaped general notice. Not until nine years had passed was a second edition called for. Two more editions were published in the author's lifetime, with innumerable corrections and omissions. It has since gone through many editions, and is perhaps one of the most notable books, both for its quality and for the influence it has exerted, of the century.

But it must not be forgotten that it owes by far the greater part both of its motif and of its charm to FitzGerald. Those who trace the poems to

their source, and compare FitzGerald's translation with the original, are destined both to disappointment and amazement. In the Persian, the thought seems trite and commonplace, the quality sensual, and even gross. In translation, it has indeed, like the bones of the drowned king in The Tempest, suffered a change "into something rich and strange". The profound emotion, the wistful melancholy, the exquisite beauty of form and cadence are all the added gift of FitzGerald. In his hands the spirit of the book is only comparable to the spirit of Ecclesiastes..... He has enriched a bare and simple theme by sweet and solemn harmonies of subtle thought and moving eloquence. As he wrote himself of the book in memorable words, "It is a desperate sort of thing, unfortunately at the bottom of all thinking men's minds; but made Music of."

It may be said, to translate that fine sentence into a more harsh and exact terminology, that the poem is perhaps the most stately and mournful presentation ever made of Agnosticism, together with its resultant Epicureanism. It is the cry of a spirit at bay, confronted at the same time with the rich and varied delights of life;

the brevity of all sweet experience, and the terror of the unknown darkness which waits to receive the perceptive spirit. The soul asks itself what the meaning of it all is. It finds itself in a world full of beauty and delight, thrilled with every kind of desirable sensation; after the first child-like ecstasy is over, it begins to perceive woven into the texture, the dark lines of sin and suffering, of shame and grief, which transform what might be tranquil and beautiful into something harsh and unbearable; and then too there opens a still darker and mistier prospect upon the view. Whichever way it looks, death closes the prospect like a wall, till the spirit, disillusioned and terrified, asks itself why it was placed in so congenial a sphere and with so immortal an outlook, only to be confronted with the blank mystery of extinction.

The only answer to such questionings is the answer of faith, and that, to the distracted and melancholy mind, is nothing more than a faint hope, a light of sunrise seen across dark valleys and cold mountain ranges.

The appeal of such a book at this point of the world's history is plain enough.

The rapid advance of science, probing nature and finding everywhere evidence of a stern and immutable law, has acted in reasonable minds as a sharp solvent of facile creeds and religious idealisms. The only consolation for the pain, which comes inevitably to minds occupied with so despairing a dilemma, is to feel that the very despair itself can be idealised and made beautiful. Nothing can heal the pain but a larger and more hopeful certainty; but to find that even the darkness of the pit is illumined by rays of sweetness and tenderness, may lend the heart courage, and form the first firm steps by which the soul can climb a little way out of the abyss, and dare to hope that the end is not yet. And thus there comes a certain touch not only of resignation to a Will that none can resist, but a hope of light beyond the horizon, of a haven after troubled seas.

Arthur Christopher Benson

Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam.
Translated into English Verse by Edward Fitzgerald.

THE
RUBAIYAT
OF
OMAR
KHAYYAM
OF
NAISHAPUR

AWAKE! FOR MORNING IN THE BOWL OF NIGHT HAS FLUNG THE STONE THAT PUTS THE STARS TO FLIGHT: AND LO! THE HUNTER OF THE EAST HAS CAUGHT THE SULTAN'S TURRET IN A NOOSE OF LIGHT.

DREAMING WHEN DAWN'S LEFT HAND WAS IN THE SKY I HEARD A VOICE WITHIN THE TAVERN CRY, "AWAKE MY LITTLE ONES, AND FILL THE CUP BEFORE LIFE'S LIQUOR IN ITS CUP BE DRY."

III.

And, as the Cock crew, those who
stood before
The Tavern shouted — "Open then
the Door!
"You know how little while we have
to stay,
"And, once departed, may return no
more."

IV.

Now the New Year reviving old
Desires,
The thoughtful Soul to Solitude
retires,
Where the White Hand of Moses
on the Bough
Puts out, and Jesus from the
Ground suspires.

V.

Iram indeed is gone with all its Rose,
And Jamshýd's Sev'n-ring'd Cup where no one knows:
But still the Vine her ancient Ruby yields,
And still a Garden by the Water blows.

VI.

And David's lips are lock't; but in divine
High piping Péhlevi, with "Wine! Wine! Wine!
Red Wine!"—the Nightingale cries to the Rose
That yellow Cheek of her's to'... incarnadine.

Quatrain 4.

VII

Come, fill the Cup, and in the Fire of Spring
The Winter Garment of Repentance fling:
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To fly — and Lo! the Bird is on the Wing.

VIII

And look — a thousand Blossoms with the Day
Woke — and a thousand scatter'd into Clay:
And this first Summer Month — that brings the Rose
Shall take Jamshýd and Kaikobád away.

IX

But come with old Khayyám and leave the Lot
Of Kaikobád and Kaikhosrú—forgot:
Let Rustum lay about him as he will,
Or Hátim Tai cry Supper—heed them not.

X

With me along some Strip of Herbage strown
That just divides the desert from the sown,
Where name of Slave and Sultán scarce is known,
And pity Sultán Máhmúd on his Throne.

XI

Here with a Loaf of Bread
beneath the Bough,
A Flask of Wine, a Book
of Verse — and Thou
Beside me singing in
the Wilderness —
And Wilderness is Paradise enow.

XII.

How sweet is mortal Sovranty!"
—think some:
Others—"How blest the Paradise
to come!"
Ah, take the Cash in hand and
wave the Rest;
Oh, the brave Music of a *distant*
Drum!"

XIII

Look to the Rose that blows
about us "Lo,
"Laughing" she says, into the
World I blow;
"At once the silken Tassel of my
Purse
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden
throw."

XIV.

The Worldly Hope men set their
Hearts upon
Turns Ashes — or it prospers; and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face
Lighting a little Hour or two —
is gone.

XV.

And those who husbanded the Golden Grain,
And those who flung it to the Winds like Rain,
Alike to no such aureate Earth are turn'd
As, buried once, Men want dug up again.

XVI.

Think, in this batter'd
Caravanserai
Whose Doorways are alter-
nate Night and Day,
How Sultán after Sultán
with his Pomp
Abode his Hour or two, and went
his way.

XVII.

They say the Lion and the
Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshýd
gloried and drank deep:
And Bahrám, that great Hunter — the
Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, and he lies ...
fast asleep.

XVIII.

I sometimes think that never
blows so red
The Rose as where some
buried Cæsar bled;
That every Hyacinth the
Garden wears
Dropt in its Lap from some once
lovely Head.

XIX.

And this delightful Herb whose
tender Green
Fledges the River's Lip on
which we lean —
Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who
knows
From what once lovely Lip it
springs unseen!

XX.

Ah, my Beloved, fill the Cup that clears
To-DAY of past Regrets and future Fears
To-morrow?—— Why, To-morrow I may be
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n Thousand Years.

XXI.

Lo! some we loved, the loveliest and the best
That Time and Fate of all their Vintage prest,
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,
And one by one crept silently to Rest.

XXII.

And we, that now make merry
in the Room
They left, and Summer dresses
in new Bloom,
Ourselves must we beneath—
the Couch of Earth
Descend, ourselves to make a
Couch—for whom?

XXIII.

Ah, make the most of what we
yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust
descend;
Dust into Dust, and under Dust,
to lie,
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans
Singer, and—sans End!

XXIV.

Alike for those who for
To-day prepare,
And those that after a
To-morrow stare,
A Muezzin from the Tower
of Darkness cries
"Fools! your Reward is neither
Here nor There!"

XXV.

Why, all the Saints and Sages
who discuss'd
Of the Two Worlds so learn-
-edly, are thrust
Like foolish Prophets forth; their
Words to Scorn
Are scatter'd, and their Mouths
are stopt with Dust.

XXVI

Oh, come with old Khayyám, and leave the Wise
To talk; one thing is certain, that Life flies;
One thing is certain, and the Rest is Lies;
The Flower that once has blown for ever dies.

XXVII

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great Argument
About it and about: but ever-more
Came out by the same Door as in I went.

"Into this Universe and why
not knowing, nor whence "……

XXVIII.

With them the Seed of Wisdom
did I sow,
And with my own hand
labour'd it to grow:
And this was all the Harvest that
I reap'd—
"I came like Water, and like
Wind I go."

XXIX.

Into this Universe, and *why* not
knowing,
Nor *whence*, like Water willy-
-nilly flowing:
And out of it, as Wind along the
Waste,
I know not *whither*, willy-nilly
blowing.

XXX.

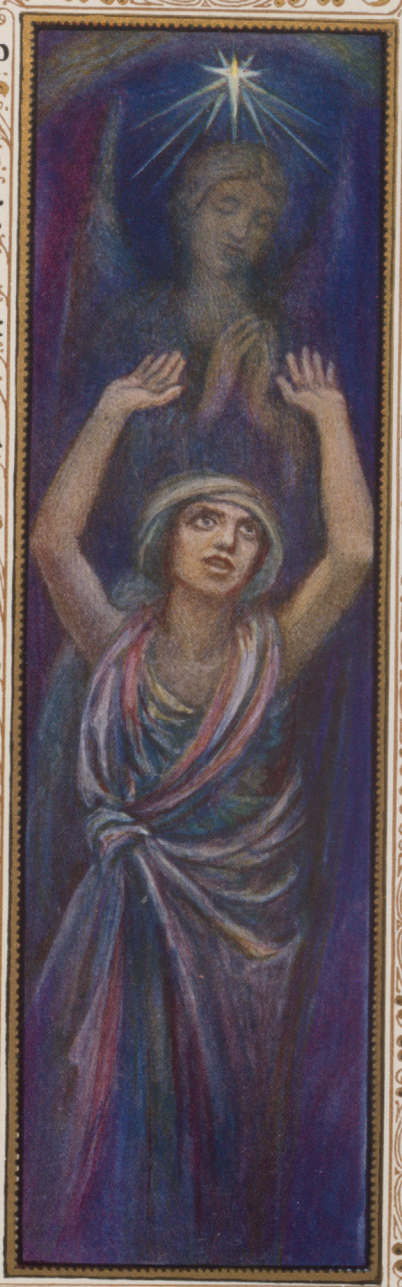
What, without asking, hither
hurried *whence*?
And, without asking, *whither*
hurried hence!
Another and another Cup to
drown
The Memory of this Impertinence!

XXXI

Up from Earth's Centre through
the Seventh Gate
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn
sate,
And many Knots unravel'd by the
Road;
But not the Knot of Human Death
and Fate.

XXXII.

There was a Door to
which I found no
Key:
There was a Veil past
which I could not see:
Some little Talk awhile
of Me and Thee
There seemed — and
then no more of Thee
and Me.



XXXIII

Then to the
rolling Heav'n
itself I cried,
Asking, "What
Lamp had
Destiny to guide
"Her little Children
stumbling in the Dark?"
And — "A blind understa-
nding!" Heav'n replied.

XXXIV

Then to this earthen Bowl did
I adjourn
My Lip the secret Well of
Life to learn:
And Lip to Lip it murmur'd—
"While you live
"Drink!—for once dead you
never shall return."

XXXV

I think the Vessel, that with
fugitive
Articulation answer'd, once
did live,
And merry-make; and the cold
Lip I kiss'd
How many Kisses might it take
—and give!

XXXVI.

For in the Market-place, one
Dusk of Day,
I watched the Potter thumping
his wet Clay:
And with its all obliterated
Tongue
It murmur'd—"Gently, Brother,
gently, pray!"

XXXVII.

Ah, fill the Cup:—what boots it
to repeat
How Time is slipping under-
neath our Feet:
Unborn To-morrow! and dead
Yesterday,
Why fret about them if To-day
be sweet!

XXXVIII

One Moment in Annihilation's
Waste,
One Moment, of the Well of
Life to taste —
The Stars are setting and the
Caravan
Starts for the Dawn of Nothing
— Oh, make haste!

XXXIX.

How long, how long, in infinite
Pursuit?
Of This and That endeavour
and dispute?
Better be merry with the fruit-
-ful Grape
Than sadden after none, or bitter-
Fruit.

XL.

You know, my Friends, how long
since in my House
For a new Marriage I did make
Carouse:
Divorced old barren Reason from
my Bed,
And took the Daughter of the Vine
to Spouse.

XLI.

For "Is" and "Is-not" though with
Rule and Line,
And "Up-and-down" without,
I could define,
I yet in all I only cared to
know,
Was never deep in anything
but — Wine.

XLII.

And lately, by the Tavern Door agape,
Came stealing through the Dusk an Angel Shape
Bearing a Vessel on his Shoulder; and
He bid me taste of it; and 'twas — the Grape!

XLIII.

The Grape that can with Logic absolute
The Two-and-Seventy jarring Sects confute:
The subtle Alchemist that in a Trice
Life's leaden Metal into Gold transmute.

"The Grape.....the subtle
Alchemist that in a Trice Life's
leaden Metal into Gold transmute"

XLIV.

The mighty Mahmúd, the victor-
ious Lord,
That all the misbelieving and
black Horde
Of Fears and Sorrows that infest
the Soul
Scatters and Slays with his en-
chanted Sword.

XLV.

But leave the Wise to wrangle,
and with me
The Quarrel of the Universe
let be:
And, in some corner of the Hubbub
coucht,
Make Game of that which makes as
much of Thee.

XLVI.

For in and out, above, about, below,
'Tis nothing but a Magic Shadow-show,
Play'd in a Box whose Candle is the Sun,
Round which we Phantom Figures come and go.

XLVII.

And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you press,
End in the Nothing all Things end in — Yes —
Then fancy while Thou art, Thou art but what
Thou shalt be — Nothing — Thou shalt not be less.

XLVIII

While the Rose blows along the
River Brink,
With old Khayyám the Ruby
Vintage drink:
And when the Angel with his
darker Draught
Draws up to Thee —— take that,
and do not shrink.

XLIX.

'Tis all a Chequer-board of Nights and Days
Where Destiny with Men for Pieces plays:
Hither and thither moves, and mates, and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

L.

The Ball no Question makes of Ayes and Noes,
But Right or Left as strikes the Player goes;
And He that toss'd Thee down into the Field,
He knows about it all — He knows — He knows!

LI.

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.

LII

And that inverted Bowl we call The Sky,
Whereunder crawling coop't we live and die,
Lift not thy hands to *It* for help — for It
Rolls impotently on as Thou or I.

LIII.

With Earth's first Clay They did
the Last Man's knead,
And then of the Last Harvest
sow'd the Seed:
Yea, the first Morning of Creation
wrote
What the Last Dawn of Reckoning
shall read.

LIV.

I tell Thee this — When, starting
from the Goal,
Over the shoulders of the —
flaming Foal
Of Heav'n Parwín and
Mushtara they flung,
In my predestin'd Plot of Dust and
Soul

LV.

The Vine had struck a Fibre; which about
If clings my Being — let the Sufi flout;
Of my Base Metal may be filed a Key,
That shall unlock the Door he howls without.

LVI.

And this I know: whether the one True Light,
Kindle to Love, or Wrath consume me quite,
One Glimpse of It within the Tavern caught
Better than in the Temple lost outright.

LVII.

Ah, Thou, who didst with Pitfall and with Gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predes-tination round
Enmesh me, and impute my Fall to Sin?

LVIII

Ah, Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,
And who with Eden didst devise the Snake;
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd, Man's Forgiveness give —and take!

RUBÁIYÁT

LIX.

LISTEN AGAIN. One Evening at the Close
Of Ramazán, ere the better Moon arose,
In that old Potter's Shop I stood alone
With the clay Population round in Rows.

LX.

And, strange to tell, among that Earthen Lot
Some could articulate, while others not:
And suddenly one more impatient cried—"Who is
the Potter, pray, and who the Pot?".....

LXI.

Then said another — "Surely
not in vain
"My Substance from the
common Earth was ta'en,
"That He who subtly
wrought me into Shape
Should stamp me back to common
Earth again."

LXII.

Another said — "Why, ne'er a
peevish Boy,
"Would break the Bowl from
which he drank in Joy;
"Shall He that *made* the Vessel
in pure Love
"And Fansy, in an after Rage —
destroy!"

LXIII

None answer'd this; but after..... Silence spake
A Vessel of a more ungainly Make:
"They sneer at me for leaning all awry;
What! did the Hand then of the Potter shake?"

LXIV.

Said one — "Folks of a surly Tapster tell,
"And daub his Visage with the Smoke of Hell;
"They talk of some strict Testing of us — Pish!
"He's a Good Fellow, and 'twill all be well."

LXV.

Then said another with a long-drawn Sigh,
"My Clay with long oblivion is gone dry:
"But, fill me with the old familiar Juice,
"Methinks I might recover by-and-bye!"

LXVI.

So while the Vessels one by one were speaking,
One spied the little Crescent all were seeking
And then they jogg'd each other—, "Brother! Brother!
"Hark to the Porter's Shoulder-knot a-creaking!"

LXVII.

Ah, with the Grape my fading
Life provide,
And wash my Body whence the
Life has died,
And in a Windingsheet of
Vine-leaf wrapt,
So bury me by some sweet
Garden-side.

LXVIII.

That ev'n my buried Ashes such
a Snare
Of Perfume shall fling up into
the Air,
As not a True Believer passing
by
But shall be overtaken unaware.

LXIX

Indeed the Idols I have loved
so long
Have done my Credit in Men's
Eye much wrong:
Have drown'd my Honour in a
shallow Cup,
And sold my Reputation for a
song.

LXX.

Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft
before
I swore—but was I sober when
I swore?
And then and then came Spring, and
Rose-in-hand
My thread-bare Penitence apieces
tore.

"And then and then came Spring"

LXXI.

And much as Wine has play'd
the Infidel,
And robb'd me of my Robe of
Honour—well,
I often wonder what the Vintners
buy
One half so precious as the Goods
they sell.

LXXII.

Alas, that Spring should vanish
with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented
Manuscript should close!
The Nightingale that in the
Branches sang,
Ah, whence, and whither flown
again, who knows!

LXXIII.

Ah, Love! could thou and I with
Fate conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of
Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to
bits — and then
Re-mould it nearer to the
Heart's Desire!

LXXIV.

Ah, Moon of my Delight who
know'st no wane,
The Moon of Heav'n is rising
once again:
How oft hereafter rising shall
she look
Through this same Garden
after me — in vain!

AND when Thyself with shining Foot shall pass
Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on the Grass,
And in thy joyous Errand reach the Spot
Where I made one — turn down an empty Glass.

TAMÁM SHUD.

HERE·ENDS·THE·RUBAIYAT
of Omar Khayyam Translated by Edward Fitzgerald. The text of this Edition is that of MDCCCLIX.....The Illustrations are by E. Geddes; and the borders, initials and writing by A. Sutcliffe.

OMAR KHAYYAM

THE ASTRONOMER-POET OF PERSIA.

Omar Khayyám was born at Naishápúr in Khorassán in the latter half of our Eleventh, and died within the First Quarter of our Twelfth, Century. The slender Story of his Life is curiously twined about that of two others, ⁘ very considerable Figures in their Time and Country; one of them, Hasan al Sabbáh, مد whose very Name has lengthen'd down to us as a terrible and Synonym for Murder: and the other (who also tells the Story of all Three) Nizám al Mulk, Vizyr to Alp the Lion and Malik Shah, Son and Grandson of Toghrul Beg the Tartar, who had wrested Persia from the feeble Successor of Mahmúd the Great, and founded that Seljukian Dynasty which finally roused Europe into the Crusades. ⁘ This Nizám al Mulk, in his *Wasíyat or Testament* — which he wrote and left as a

Memorial for future Statesmen — relates the following, as quoted in the "Calcutta Review," No.59, from Mirkhond's "History of the Assassins."

"One of the greatest of the wise men of Khorassán was the Imám Mowaffak of Naishápúr, a man highly honoured and reverenced, — may God rejoice his soul; his illustrious years exceeded eighty five, and it was the universal belief that every boy who read the Koran or studied the traditions in his presence, would assuredly attain to honour and happiness. For this cause did my father send me from Tús to Naishápúr with Abd-u-samad, the doctor of law, that I might employ myself in study and learning under the guidance of that illustrious teacher. Towards me he ever turned an eye of favour and kindness, and as his pupil I felt for him extreme affection and devotion, so that I passed four years in his service. When I first came there, I found two other pupils of mine own age newly arrived, Hakim Omar Khayyám, and the ill-fated Ben Sabbah. Both were endowed with sharpness of wit;

and the highest natural powers, and we three formed a close friendship together. When the Imám rose from his lectures, they used to join me, and we repeated to each other the lessons we had heard. Now Omar was a native of Naishápúr, while Hassan Ben Sabbah's father was one Ali, a man of austere life and practice, but heretical in his creed and doctrine. One day Hassan said to me and to Khayyam, 'It is a universal belief that the pupils of the Imám Mowaffak will attain to fortune. Now, even if we all do not attain thereto, without doubt one of us will; what then shall be our mutual pledge and bond?' We answered, 'Be it what you please.' 'Well,' he said, 'let us make a vow, that to whomsoever this fortune falls, he shall share it equally with the rest, and reserve no pre-eminence for himself!' 'Be it so,' we both replied, and on these terms we mutually pledged our words. Years rolled on, and I went from Khorassán to Transoxiana, and wandered to Ghazni and Cabul; and when I returned, I was invested with office, and rose to be administrator of affairs during the Sultanate of Sultan Alp Arslán.'"

"He goes on to state that years passed by, and both his old school-friends found him out, and came and claimed a share in his good fortune, according to the school-day vow. The Vizier was generous and kept his word. Hassan demanded a place in the government, which the Sultan granted at the Vizier's request; but discontented with a gradual rise, he plunged into the maze of intrigue of an oriental court, and, failing in a base attempt to supplant his benefactor, he was disgraced and fell. After many mishaps and wanderings, Hassan became the head of the Persian sect of the Ismailians,— a party of fanatics who had long murmured in obscurity, but rose to an evil eminence under the guidance of his strong and evil will. In A.D. 1090, he seized the castle of Alamút, in the province of Rúdbar, which lies in the mountainous tract south of the Caspian Sea; and it was from this mountain he obtained that evil celebrity among the Crusaders as the Old Man of the Mountains, and spread terror through the Mohammedan world; and it is yet disputed whether the word Assassin, which they have

left in the language of modern Europe as their dark memorial, is derived from the hashish, or opiate of hemp-leaves (the Indian bhang), with which they maddened themselves to the sullen pitch of oriental desperation, or from the name of the founder of the dynasty, whom we have seen in his quiet collegiate days, at Naishápúr. One of the countless victims of the Assassin's dagger was Nizam-ul-Mulk himself, the old school-boy friend."

"Omar Khayyám also came to the Vizier to claim his share; but not to ask for title or office. 'The greatest boon you can confer on me', he said 'is to let me live in a corner under the shadow of your fortune, to spread wide the advantages of Science, and pray for your long life and prosperity.' The Vizier tells us, that, when he found Omar was really sincere in his refusal, he pressed him no further, but granted him a yearly pension of 1,200 mithkals of gold from the treasury of Naishápúr."

"At Naishápúr thus lived and died Omar Khayyám, busied', adds the Vizier, 'in winning knowledge of every kind, and especially

in Astronomy, wherein he attained to a very high pre-eminence. Under the Sultanate of Malik Shah, he came to Merv, and obtained great praise for his proficiency in science, and the Sultan showered favours upon him.' "

"When Malik Shah determined to reform the calendar, Omar was one of the eight learned men employed to do it; the result was the Jaláli era, (so called from Jalal-ul-din, one of the King's names), – 'a computation of time', says Gibbon, 'which surpasses the Julian, and approaches the accuracy of the Gregorian style.' He is also the author of some astronomical tables entitled 'Zíji-Malik-sháhí', and the French have lately republished and translated an Arabic Treatise of his on Algebra.

These severer Studies, and his Verses, which, though happily fewer than any Persian Poet's, and, though perhaps fugitively composed, the Result of no fugitive Emotion or Thought, are probably the Work and Event of his Life, leaving little else to record. Perhaps he liked a little Farming too, so often as he speaks of the "Edge of the Tilth", on which he

loved to rest with his Diwán of Verse, his Loaf — and his Wine.

"His Takhallus or poetical name (Khayyám) signifies a Tent-maker, and he is said to have at one time exercised that trade, perhaps before the Nizám-ul-Mulk's generosity raised him to independence. Many Persian poets similarly derive their names from their occupations; thus we have Attár, 'a druggist', Assar, 'an oil presser', etc. (Though all these, like our Smiths, Archers, Millers, Fletchers, etc., may so simply retain the Surname of an hereditary calling). "Omar himself alludes to his name in the following whimsical lines:—

Khayyám, who stitched the tents of Science,
Has fallen in grief's furnace and been suddenly burned;
The shears of Fate have cut the tent ropes of his life,
And the broker of Hope has sold him for nothing!'

"We have only one more anecdote to give of his Life, and that relates to the close; related in the anonymous preface which is so sometimes prefixed to his poems; it has been

printed in the Persian in the appendix to Hydés Veterum Persarum Religio, p. 499; and D'Herbelot alludes to it in his Bibliothéque under Khiam[1]:- 'It is written in the chronicles of the ancients that this King of the Wise, Omar Khayyám, died at Naishápúr in the year of the Hegira, 517 ✣ (AD 1123); in science he was unrivalled, - the very paragon of his age. Kwájah Nizámi of Samar-cand, who was one of his pupils, relates the following story: 'I often used to hold conversa-tions with my teacher, Omar Khayyám, in a garden; and one day he said to me, 'my tomb shall be in a spot where the north wind may scatter roses over it.' I wondered at the words he spake, but I knew that his were no

[1] Though *he* attributes the story to a Khiam, "Philosophe Musulman qui a vêcu en Odeur de Sainteté dans la Fin du premier et le Commencement du second Siècle," no part of which, except the "Philosphe", can apply to our Khayyám, who, however, may claim the Story as *his*, on the Score of Rubáiyát, 77 and 78 of the present Version. The Rashness of the Words, according to D'Herbelot, consisted in being so opposed to those in the Korán: "No Man knows where he shall die."

idle words. Years after when I chanced to re-visit Naishápúr, I went to his final resting-place, and lo! it was just outside a garden, and trees laden with fruit stretched their boughs over the garden wall, and dropped their flowers upon his tomb, so as the stone was hidden under them.'"

Thus far — without fear of Trespass — from the "Calcutta Review."

Though the Sultan "shower'd Favours upon him," Omar's Epicurean Audacity of Thought and Speech caused him to be regarded askance in his own Time and Country. He is said to have been especially hated and dreaded by the Súfis, whose Practice he ridiculed, and whose Faith amounts to little more than his own when stript of the Mysticism and formal Compliment to Islamism which Omar would not hide under. Their Poets, including Háfiz, who are (with the exception of Firdúsi) the most considerable in Persia, borrowed largely, indeed, of Omar's material, but turning it to a mystical Use more convenient to Themselves and the People they address'd; a People quite as quick of Doubt as of Belief;

quite as keen of the Bodily Senses as of the In-
-tellectual; and delighting in a cloudy Element
compounded of all, in which they could float
luxuriously between Heaven and Earth, and
this World and the Next, on the wings of a
poetical expression, that could be recited in-
-differently whether at the Mosque or the
Tavern. Omar was too honest of Heart as
well as of Head for this. Having failed (however
mistakenly) of finding any Providence but
Destiny, and any World but This, he set about
making the most of it; preferring rather to
soothe the Soul through the Senses into Acqui-
-escence with Things as they were, than to
perplex it with vain mortifications after what
they might be. It has been seen that his
Worldly Desires, however, were not exorbitant;
and he very likely takes a humorous pleasure
in exaggerating them above that Intellect in-
whose exercise he must have found great plea-
-sure, though not in a Theological direction.
However this may be, his Worldly Pleasures
are what they profess to be without any pre-
-tence at divine Allegory: his Wine is the
veritable Juice of the Grape: his Tavern, where

it was to be had; his Sáki, the Flesh and Blood that poured it out for him: all which, and where the Roses were in Bloom, was all he profess'd to want of this World or to expect of Paradise.

The Mathematic Faculty, too, which re-gulated his Fansy, and condensed his Verse to a Quality and Quantity un-known in Persian, perhaps in Oriental, Poetry, help'd by its very virtue perhaps to render him less popular with his countrymen. If the Greeks were Children in Gossip, what does Persian Literature imply but a Second Childish-ness of Garrulity. And certainly if no ungeo-metric Greek was to enter Plato's School of Philosophy, no so unchastised a Persian should enter on the Race of Persian Verse, with its "fatal Facility" of running on long after Thought is winded! But Omar was not only the Single Mathematician of his Country's Poets; he was also of that older Time and stouter Temper, before the native Soul of Persia was quite broke by a foreign Creed as well as foreign Conquest. Like his great Predecessor Firdúsi, who was as little of a Mystic; who scorned to use even a Word of the very language in—

which the New Faith came clothed; and who was suspected, not of Omar's Irreligion indeed, but of secretly clinging to the ancient Fire-Religion of Zerdusht, of which so many of the Kings he sang were Worshippers.

For whatever Reason, however, Omar, as before said, has never been popular in his own Country, and therefore has been but charily transmitted abroad. The M.SS. of his Poems, mutilated beyond the average Casualties of Oriental Transcription, are so rare in the East as scarce to have reached Westward at all, in spite of all that Arms and Science have brought us. There is none at the India House, none at the Bibliothèque Impériale of Paris. We know but of one in England; ⁘ No.140 of the Ouseley MSS. at the Bodleian, written at Shiraz, AD. 1460. This contains but 158 ⁘ Rubáiyát. One in the Asiatic Society's Library of Calcutta (of which we have a copy) contains (and yet incomplete) 516, though swelled to that by all kinds of Repetition and Corruption. So Von Hammer speaks of his Copy as containing ⁘ about 200, while Dr. Sprenger catalogues the Lucknow MS. at double that number. The Scribes,

too, of the Oxford and Calcutta MSS. seem to do their Work under a sort of Protest; each beginning with a Tetrastich (whether genuine or not) taken out of its alphabetic order; the Oxford with one of Apology; the Calcutta with one of Execration too stupid for Omar's even had Omar been stupid enough to execrate himself.[2]

The Reviewer, who translates the foregoing Particulars of Omar's Life, and some of his Verse into Prose, concludes by comparing him with Lucretius, both in natural Temper and Genius, and as acted upon by the Circumstances in which he lived. Both, indeed, men of subtle Intellect and high Imagination, instructed in Learning beyond their day, and of Hearts passionate for Truth and Justice; who justly revolted from their Country's false Religion, and false, or foolish Devotion to

[2] "Since this Paper was written" (adds the Reviewer in a note) "we have met with a Copy of a very rare Edition, printed at Calcutta in 1836. This contains 438 Tetrastichs, with an Appendix containing 54 others not found in some MSS."

it; but who yet fell short of replacing what they subverted by any such better Hope as others, upon whom no better Faith had dawned, had yet made a Law to themselves. Lucretius, indeed, with such material as Epicurus furnished, consoled himself with the construction of a Machine that needed no Constructor, and acting by a Law that implied no Lawgiver; and so composing himself into a Stoical rather than Epicurean severity of Attitude, sat down to contemplate the mechanical Drama of the Universe of which he was part Actor; himself and all about him, (as in his own sublime Description of the Roman Theatre), coloured with the lurid reflex of the Curtain that was suspended between them and the outer Sun. Omar, more desperate, or more careless of any such laborious System as resulted in nothing more than hopeless Necessity, flung his own Genius and Learning with a bitter jest into the general Ruin which their insufficient glimpses only served to reveal; and, yielding his Senses to the actual Rose and Vine, only diverted his thoughts by balancing ideal possibilities of Fate, Freewill, Existence and Annihilation; with an

oscillation that so generally inclined to the nega-
-tive and lower side, as to make such Stanzas as
the following exceptions to his general Philosophy:-

Oh, if my Soul can fling his Dust aside,
And naked on the Air of Heaven ride,
Is't not a Shame, is't not a Shame for Him
So long in this Clay Suburb to abide!

Or is that but a Tent, where rests anon
A Sultán to his Kingdom passing on,
And which the swarthy Chamberlain shall strike
Then when the Sultán rises to be gone?

With regard to the present Translation....
The original Rubáiyát (as, missing an
Arabic Guttural, these Tetrastichs are-
more musically called), are independent Stanzas
consisting each of four Lines of equal, though
varied, Prosody, sometimes all rhyming, but
oftener (as here attempted) the third line sus-
-pending the Cadence by which the last atones
with the former Two. Something as in the ⁘
Greek Alcaic, where the third line seems to
lift and suspend the Wave that falls over in

the last. As usual with such kind of Oriental Verse, the Rubáiyát follow one another according to Alphabetic Rhyme —— a strange Farrago of Grave and Gay. Those here selected are strung into something of an Eclogue; with perhaps a less than equal proportion of the "Drink and make-merry," which (genuine or not) recurs over-frequently in the Original. For Lucretian as Omar's Genius might be, he cross'd that darker Mood with much of Oliver de Basselin Humour. Any way, the Result is sad enough: saddest perhaps when most ostentatiously merry: any way, fitter to move Sorrow than Anger toward the old tent-maker, who, after vainly endeavouring to unshackle his Steps from Destiny, and to catch some authentic Glimpse of To-morrow, fell back upon To-day (which has outlasted so many To-morrows!) as the only Ground to stand upon, however momentarily slipping from under his Feet.

Notes.

Quatrain 1. Flinging a Stone into the Cup, was the signal for 'To Horse!' in the desert.

Quatrain 2. The '*False Dawn*', *Subhi Khâzib*: a transient light on the horizon about an hour before the *Subhi Sâdhik*, or '*True Dawn*'; a well — known phenomenon in the East. The Persians call the Morning Gray, or Dusk, '*Wolf - and - Sheep - While*.' 'Almost at odds with, which is which'.

Quatrain 4. New Year: Beginning with the Vernal Equinox, it must be remembered; and (howsoever the old Solar Year is practically..... superseded by the clumsy Lunar Year that dates from the Mohammedan Hijra) still com-

Notes.

Quatrain 4. continued.

commemorated by a Festival that is said to have been appointed by the very Jamshyd whom Omar so often talks of, and whose yearly calendar he helped to rectify.

"The sudden approach and rapid advance of the Spring," (says a late traveller in Persia) "are very striking. Before the snow is well off the ground, the trees burst into blossom, and the flowers start from the soil. At *Now Rooz* (*their* New Year's Day) the snow was lying in patches on the hills and in the shaded valleys, while the fruit-trees in the garden were budding beautifully, and green plants and flowers springing upon the plains on every side ——

'And

Notes.

Quatrain 4. continued.

"And on old Hyem's chin and icy crown—
"An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
"Is, as in mockery, set....."

'Among the plants newly appeared, I recognized some old acquaintances I had not seen for many a year: among these, two varieties of the thistle; a coarse species of the daisy, like the horse-gowan; red and white clover, the dock, the blue corn-flower; and that vulgar herb, the dandelion, rearing its yellow crest on the banks of the water-courses.' 'The nightingale was not yet heard, for the rose was not yet blown: but an almost identical blackbird and woodpecker helped to make

Notes.

Quatrain 4. continued.

make up something of a north-country spring

Exodus IV., 6: where Moses draws forth his hand — not, according to the Persians, "*leprous as snow*" but *white* as our May-blossom in spring perhaps! .... According to them also the healing power of Jesus resided in his breath.

Quatrain 5.

Irám, planted by King Schedad, and now sunk somewhere in the sands of Arabia.

Jamshyd's Seven-ring'd Cup was typical of the seven heavens, seven planets, seven seas, etc., and was a *Divining Cup*.

Notes.

Quatrain 6. *Péhlevi*, the old heroic *Sanskit* of Persia. Háfiz also speaks of the Nightingale's *Péhlevi*.... which did not change with the people's.
Roses: I am not sure if this refers to the red rose looking sickly, or the yellow rose that ought to be red; red, white and yellow roses all common in Persia.

Quatrain 9. Rustum, the "Hercules" of Persia, whose exploits are.... among the most celebrated in the Shah-náma.
Hátim Tái, a well-known type of Oriental generosity.

Quatrain 12. A Drum — beaten outside a palace.

Notes.

Quatrain 13. That is, the rose's golden centre.

Quatrain 17. Persepolis, called also *Takht'i... Jamshyd* —The Throne of..... Jamshyd, "King Splendid", of the mythical *Peeshdâdian* dynas-ty, and supposed (with Shah-nama authority) to have been founded and built by him—, though others refer it to the.... work of the Genie King, Ján Ibn Jann, who also built the Pyramids before the time of Adam. It is also called *Chel-minar*—*Forty-column*; which is Persian pro-bably, for column-countless; the hall they adorned or supported with their lotus base and tau-rine capital indicating double that number, though now counted down to less than half by

Notes.

Quatrain 17. continued.

by earthquake and other-
inroad. By whomsoever built,
unquestionably the monument
of a long extinguished dynasty
and mythology; its halls, cham-
-bers and galleries, inscribed
with arrow-head characters;
and sculptured with colossal,
wing'd, half-human figures
like those of Nimroud; pro-
-cessions of priests and warriors
-(doubtful if anywhere a woman)-
and kings sitting on thrones
or in chariots, staff or lotus-
flower in hand, and the *ferooher*
-symbol of existence — with
his wing'd globe, common also
to Assyria and Egypt — over
their heads. All this, together
with aqueduct and cistern, and
other appurtenance of a royal
palace, upon a terrace-platform,
ascended.

Notes.

Quatrain 17. continued.

ascended by a double flight of stairs that may be galloped up, and cut out of and into the rock-side of the *Koh'i Ràhmets*, *Mountain of Mercy*, where the old fire-worshipping sovereigns are buried, and over-looking the plain of Merdasht.

Persians, like some other people it seems, love to write their own names, with sometimes a verse or two, on their country's monuments ..... Mr. Binning (from whose sensible travels the foregoing account is mainly condens't.) found several such in Persepolis; in one place a fine line of Háfiz: in another an original, no doubt, he says, "by no great poet, however right in his sentiment." The words somehow looked

Notes.

Quatrain 17. continued.

looked to us, and the "halting metre" sounded, familiar; and on looking back at last among the five hundred Rubáiyát of the Calcutta Omar MS.—*there* it is: old Omar quoted by one of his countrymen, and here turned into hasty rhyme, at any rate —

"This palace that its top to—
heaven threw,
And kings their forehead on
its threshold drew—
I saw a ring-dove sitting
there alone,
And 'coo, coo, coo,' she cried,
and 'coo, coo, coo'."

So, as it seems, the Persian speaks the English ring-dove's *Péhlevi*, which is also articulate Persian for "Where?...."

Bahrám

Notes.

Quatrain 17. continued.

Bahrám Gúr — *Bahrám of the Wild Ass*, from his fame in hunting it — a Sassanian sovereign, had also his seven castles (like the King of Bohemia!) each of a different colour; each with a royal mistress ÷ withinside; each of whom recounts to Bahrám a romance, according to one of the most famous poems of Persia, written by Amír Khusraw. These sevens also figuring (according to eastern mysticism) the seven heavens, and perhaps the book itself that eighth, into which the mystical seven transcend, and within which they revolve. The ruins of three of these towers are yet shown by the peasantry, as also the swamp in which Bahrám sunk, like the

Notes.

Quatrain 17. continued. the Master of Ravenswood, while pursuing his *Gúr*.

Quatrain 20. A thousand years to each planet.

Quatrain 29. Illustration. 'Into this Universe, and *why* not knowing, nor *whence*,'

Quatrain 31. Saturn: Lord of the seventh heaven.

Quatrain 32. Me and Thee: that is some individual existence or personality apart from the whole.

Quatrain 33 Illustration. "A blind understanding.

Notes.

Quatrain 38. 'The caravan travelling by night (after their New Year's Day of the Vernal Equinox) by command of Mohammed, I believe.

Quatrain 41. A laugh at his mathematics, perhaps.

Quatrain 43. 'The seventy-two sects into— which Islamism so soon split.

Illustration. 'The Grape.....the subtle Alchemist that in a— Trice Life's leaden Metal into Gold transmute.'

Quatrain 44. This alludes to Mahmúd's conquest of India and its swarthy idolaters.

Notes.

Quatrain 46. *Fanúsi Khiyál*: a magic-lanthorn still used in India, the cylin-drical interior being painted with various figures, and so lightly poised and ventilated as to revolve round the candle lighted within.

Quatrain 50. A very mysterious line in the original:
'U dánad u dánad u dánad ú'—breaking off something like our wood-pigeon's note, which she is said to take up just where she left off.

Quatrain 54. Parwín and Mushtara: the Pleiads and Jupiter.

Quatrain 59. Ramazán: the month of fasting, ends with the appear-ance of the new moon.

Notes.

Quatrain. 66.

At the close of the fasting month, Ramazán (which makes the Musulman unhealthy and unamiable), the first glimpse of the new moon (who rules their division of the year) is looked for with the utmost anxiety, and hailed with all acclamation——. Then it is that the Porter's Knot may be heard toward the *cellar*; perhaps. Old Omar has elsewhere a pretty quatrain about this same moon:-

"Be of good cheer - the sullen
month will die,
"And a young moon requite
us by and bye:
"Look how the old one meagre,
bent, and wan
"With age and fast, is fainting from the sky!"

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